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ON INITIATIC QUALIFICATIONS

Continued[1]

If we consider infirmities or simple bodily defects as outward signs of certain imperfections of a psychological nature, it will be necessary to distinguish between defects that a person possesses from birth, or that develop naturally within them during their lifetime as consequences of a certain predisposition, and those that are simply the result of some accident. It is evident, in fact, that the former reflect something that can be regarded as more strictly inherent to the very nature of the being, and which, consequently, is more serious from our point of view, although, moreover, since nothing can happen to a being that does not truly correspond to some more or less essential element of its nature, even infirmities of apparently accidental origin cannot be regarded as entirely irrelevant in this respect. On the other hand, if we consider these same defects as direct obstacles to the performance of rites or to their effective action on the being, the distinction we have just indicated no longer needs to be made. But it must be clearly understood that certain defects, while not constituting such obstacles, are nonetheless, for the first reason, impediments to initiation, and sometimes even impediments of a more absolute nature, for they express an inner "deficiency" rendering the individual unfit for any initiation, whereas there may be infirmities that merely hinder the effectiveness of the "technical" methods specific to one or another form of initiation.

Some may be surprised that we say that accidental infirmities also have a correspondence in the very nature of the being afflicted by them; we will refer them to the considerations we have previously set forth concerning the relationship of the individual to the environment in

1 See No. 196, April, and 197, May

which they manifest[1], for this is, in essence, a direct consequence. As we said then, all relations between beings manifested in the same world, or, what amounts to the same thing, all their reciprocal actions and reactions, can only be real if they are the expression of something that belongs to the nature of each of these beings. In other words, everything that a being undergoes, as well as everything that it does, constituting a "modification" of itself, must necessarily correspond to one of the possibilities that are implied in its nature, so that there can be nothing that is purely accidental, if we understand this word in the sense of "extrinsic" as is commonly done. The whole difference here is therefore only a difference of degree: there are modifications that represent something more important or deeper than others; there are, therefore, in a sense, hierarchical values to be observed in this respect among the various possibilities of the individual domain. But, strictly speaking, nothing is indifferent or devoid of meaning, because, fundamentally, a being can only receive from the outside simple "opportunities" for the realization, in manifested mode, of the potentialities that it first carries within itself. It may also seem strange to those who rely on appearances that certain infirmities, seemingly minor from an outward standpoint, have always and everywhere been considered an impediment to initiation; a typical example of this is stuttering. In reality, a little reflection is enough to realize that, in this case, one finds precisely both of the reasons we have mentioned; and indeed, first of all, there is the fact that the ritual "technique" almost always involves the pronunciation of certain verbal formulas, a pronunciation which must naturally be correct above all else to be valid, something that stuttering prevents those afflicted with it from achieving. On the other hand, such an infirmity is the manifest sign of a certain "arrhythmia" of being, if one may use that word; Moreover, the two things are closely linked here, for the very use of the formulas to which we have just alluded is simply one application of the "science of rhythm" to the initiatory method, so that the inability to pronounce them correctly ultimately depends on the internal "derhythmia" of the individual.

This "derhythmia" is itself only a particular case of disharmony or

1 The Being and the Milieu, December 1933 issue.

imbalance in the constitution of the individual; and it can be said, generally speaking, that all bodily anomalies that are marks of a more or less pronounced imbalance, while not necessarily always absolute impediments (for there are obviously many degrees to consider), are at the very least unfavorable indicators in a candidate for initiation. It may well be that such anomalies, which are not strictly speaking infirmities, are not of a nature to prevent the performance of the ritual work, but that nevertheless, if they reach a degree of severity indicating a profound and irremediable imbalance, they alone suffice to definitively disqualify the candidate, in accordance with what we have already explained above. Such are, for example, noticeable asymmetries of the face or limbs; but, of course, if these were only very slight asymmetries, they could not even be considered truly an anomaly, because, in fact, there is probably no one who presents perfect bodily symmetry in every respect. This can also be interpreted as meaning that, in the current state of humanity at least, no individual is perfectly balanced in all respects; And, indeed, the realization of the perfect balance of individuality, implying the complete neutralization of all opposing tendencies acting within it, and thus fixation at its very center—the only point where these oppositions cease to manifest themselves—is equivalent, purely and simply, to the restoration of the "primordial state." We see, therefore, that nothing should be exaggerated, and that if there are individuals qualified for initiation, they are so despite a certain state of relative imbalance that is inevitable, but which initiation can and must mitigate if it produces an effective result, and even eliminate if it is carried to the degree that corresponds to the perfection of individual possibilities, that is to say, to the culmination of the "lesser mysteries."

We can also, on this occasion, make a rather curious observation: certain initiatory disqualifications, especially of the kind we just discussed, can simultaneously represent qualifications in the opposite direction, that is, with regard to "counter-initiation." One can get an idea of this if one notices, for example, the importance attributed to bodily asymmetries in certain descriptions of the Antichrist; even if these descriptions are primarily symbolic, they are nonetheless significant in this respect, since they essentially imply that these asymmetries are the visible marks

of the very nature of the being to whom they are attributed; and it is evident that the Antichrist must be considered as synthesizing within himself all powers of the "counter-initiation." This is easily understood, since counter-initiation, by its very definition, consequently leads to an increase in the imbalance of beings, the extreme of which is the "disintegration" to which we have already sometimes alluded, but this is not the place to dwell on it further, since, of course, it is not counter-initiation nor the mysteries of the "Dark Satellite" that we intend to discuss here.

We must also point out that there are certain flaws which, without being such as to prevent a virtual initiation, can prevent it from becoming effective; it goes without saying, moreover, that it is especially important to take into account the differences in methods that exist between the various initiatory forms; but, in all cases, there will be such considerations to take into account as soon as one intends to move from the "speculative" to the "operative." One of the most general cases, in this order, will be that of defects which, like certain deviations of the spine, impair the normal circulation of subtle currents in the organism; it is hardly necessary, in fact, to recall the important role that these currents play in most processes of realization, from their very beginning, and as long as individual possibilities are not exceeded. It should be added, to avoid any misunderstanding in this regard, that while the activation of these currents is consciously accomplished in certain methods, there are others where this is not the case, but where nevertheless this action is no less effective and is no less important. A thorough examination of certain ritualistic particularities, of certain "signs of recognition" for example (which are at the same time something quite different when one truly understands them), could provide very clear indications on this subject, although certainly unexpected for those not accustomed to considering things from this point of view, which is properly that of initiatory "technique." Comme il faut nous borner, nous nous contenterons de ces quelques exemples, peu nombreux sans doute, mais choisis à dessein parmi ceux qui correspondent aux cas les plus caractéristiques et les plus instructifs, de façon à faire comprendre le mieux possible ce dont ü s'agit

véritablement ; ü serait en somme peu utile, sinon tout à fait fastidieux, de les multiplier indéfiniment. Si nous avons tant insisté sur le côté corporel des qualifications initiatiques, c'est qu'il est certainement celui qui risque d'apparaître le moins clairement aux yeux e beaucoup, celui que nos contemporains sont généralement le plus disposés à méconnaître, donc celui sur lequel il y a d'autant plus Heu d'attirer spécialement leur attention, es aussi qu'il y avait là une occasion de montrer une fois de plus combien tout ce qui concerne l'initiation est loin des simp es théories plus ou moins vagues et nébuleuses que voudraient y voir tant de gens qui, par un effet trop commun de la confusion moderne, ont la prétention de parler de choses dont ils n'ont pas la moindre connaissance réelle, mais qu'ils n en croient que plus facilement pouvoir « reconstruire « au gré de leur imagination.

THE ENIGMA OF MARTINES DE PASQUALLY

Continued

In the same letter, dated July 1821, where Willermoz states that Martines died "advanced to old age," there is another noteworthy passage, according to which the initiation was transmitted to Martines by his own father: "In his ministry, he had succeeded his father, a learned, distinguished man, more prudent than his son, who had little fortune and resided in Spain. He had placed his still-young son, Martines, in the Walloon Guards, where he had a quarrel that led to a duel in which he killed his opponent; they had to flee quickly, and the father hastened to consecrate him as his successor before his departure. After a long absence, the father, sensing his end approaching, promptly summoned the son back and gave him the final ordinations." "To be honest, this story about the Walloon guards, for which it has been impossible to find any other confirmation, seems rather suspicious to us, especially if it were to imply, as Mr. van Rijnberk says, 'that Martines was born in Spain,' which is not entirely obvious; moreover, this is not a point on which Willcrmoz could have provided direct testimony, since he later states that he only met the son in 1767 in Paris, long after the father's death"[1]. Whatever the case may be regarding this secondary question, there remains the assertion that Martines received from his father not only initiation, but even the transmission of certain initiatory functions, since the word "ministry" can hardly be interpreted otherwise; and, in this regard, Mr. van Rijnberk points to a letter written in 1779 by the Freemason Falcke, in which we read the

1 This year 1767 is the very year of Martines' marriage: it is therefore very probable that the two brothers residing in Saint Domingue, for whom he would have come to Paris to solicit the cross of Saint Louis, are in reality none other than the two very rich brothers-in-law, who are mentioned, as we have already said, in the letter of April 17 and 30, 1772 cited by Papus (Martines de Pasqually, p. 58). This is also further confirmed by the fact that, in another letter of November 1, 1771, we find this sentence: "I inform you that I have finally obtained the Cross of Saint Louis from my brother-in-law" (ibid., p. 55): he had therefore not, at least for one of them, obtained it immediately in 1767, contrary to what Willermoz writes, whose memory may well have misled him on this point; it is surprising that Mr. van Rijnberk did not think to make these connections, which seem to us to sufficiently elucidate this question, which is, moreover, quite incidental.

following: “Martinez Pasqualis, a Spaniard, claims to possess secret knowledge as an inheritance from his family, who live in Spain and have thus possessed it for three hundred years; they supposedly acquired it from the Inquisition, with which his ancestors served.” There is a strong implausibility here, for it is truly difficult to see what initiatory repository the Inquisition could ever have possessed and communicated; but let us recall that, in the passage from The Crocodile that we have reproduced, it is Las Casas who denounces his friend, the Jew Eleazar, to the Inquisition, precisely because of the latter’s secret knowledge; Wouldn’t one say that something has been deliberately obscured here[2]?

Now, one might certainly ask: when Martines, or the person Vülermoz knew by that name from 1767 onwards, speaks of his father, should we take this literally, or is he referring instead solely to his “spiritual father,” whoever that may have been? Indeed, one can very well speak of an initiatory “filiation,” and it is clear that this does not necessarily coincide with filiation in the ordinary sense of the word; one might even perhaps evoke, here again, the duality of Las Casas and the Jew Eleazar...
It must be said, however, that a hereditary initiatory transmission, even involving the exercise of a certain function, would not represent a completely exceptional case; but, in the absence of sufficient data, it is very difficult to decide whether this was indeed the case of Martines. At most, one could find an indication in favor of the affirmative in certain particularities concerning Martines’ succession: he gave his eldest son, immediately after his baptism, the first consecration in the hierarchy of the Elus Coens, which may suggest that he intended him to become his successor. This son disappeared at the time of the Revolution, and Willermoz says he could not find out what became of him; as for the second son, even more singularly, we know the date of his birth, but he was never mentioned again thereafter. In any case, when Martines died in 1774, the eldest son was certainly alive; However, it was not he who succeeded him as “Grand Sovereign,” but Caignet de Lestère, and then, when the latter died in turn in 1778, Sébastien de Las Casas;

2 . Let us also note a peculiarity, from which we do not, moreover, intend to draw any conclusion: Falcke Paris in the presence of Martines, who nevertheless must have been dead for five years already.

what, under these conditions, becomes of the idea of a hereditary transmission? The fact that the son was too young to be able to fulfill these functions (he was only six years old) cannot, moreover, be invoked, for Martines could very well have appointed a substitute until he came of age, and we do not see that this was ever discussed. Yet, what is even more curious, it seems on the other hand that there was some kinship between Martines and his two successors: indeed, he speaks in a letter of "his cousin Cagnet," who, taking into account the usual spelling variations of the time, must be the same as Caignet de Lestère[3]; And, as for Sebastian de Las Casas, we have already indicated that such a relationship was suggested by his very name; but, in any case, this transmission to more or less distant relatives, when there was a direct heir, can hardly be assimilated to "dynastic succession". which Mr. van Rijnberk speaks of, and to which he even attributes "a certain esoteric importance" that we cannot quite explain.

Whether Martines was initiated by his father or someone else is not the essential question, for it sheds little light on what truly matters: to which tradition did this initiation belong? What might perhaps provide some clearer indications on this subject are the journeys that Martines probably undertook before the beginning of his initiatory activity in France; unfortunately, on this point as well, we have only very vague and dubious information, and even the assertion that he went to the East means nothing well defined, especially since, very often, in such cases, these are merely legendary or rather symbolic journeys. On this subject, Mr. van Rijnberk believes he can cite a passage from the Treatise on the Reintegration of Beings where Martines seems to say that he went to China, whereas there is nothing of the sort for much closer countries; but this journey, if it actually took place, is perhaps the least interesting of all from our current perspective, because it is clear that neither in Martines' teachings nor in his "ritual operations" is there anything that bears the slightest direct relation to the Far Eastern tradition. There is, however, in a letter from Martines, this rather remarkable sentence: "My state and my quality as a true man have always kept me in the position

3 "I inform you that I have delivered the founding letters patent to my cousin Cagust." (letter of November 1, 1771, cited by Papus, Martines de Pasqually, p. 16).

I am in"[4]; it seems that this expression "true man," which is specifically Taoist, has never been noted before, but which is undoubtedly the only one of its kind that can be found in Martines[5].

In any case, if Martines was born around 1727, his travels could not have lasted for very many years, even if there is no reason to deduct the time of his supposed time with the Walloon Guards, since his known initiatory activity begins in 1754, and at that date he would have been only 27 years old[6]. It is readily accepted that he must have gone to Spain, especially if his family origins linked him there; and perhaps also to Italy; this is very plausible indeed, and he could have brought back from a stay in these two countries some of the most striking peculiarities of his language; but, apart from the explanation of this purely external detail, it does not advance much, for, at that time, what could possibly have remained in these countries from an initiatory point of view? We must certainly look elsewhere, and, in our opinion, the most accurate indication is that given by this passage from a note by Prince Christian of Hesse-Darmstadt: "Pasquali claimed that his knowledge came from the East, but it is to be presumed that he received it from Africa," by which we must understand, in all probability, the Sephardic Jews established in North Africa since their expulsion from Spain[7]. This can indeed explain many things: first, the predominance of Jewish elements in Martines' doctrine; second, the relations he appears to have had with the Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux, as well as, as we have already noted previously, Saint-Martin's presentation of Eleazar as a "Spanish Jew"; Finally, there was the necessity, for initiatory work to be carried out in a non-Jewish environment, of "grafting," so to speak, the doctrine received from this source onto an initiatory form prevalent in the Western world, which, in the 18th century, could only be Freemasonry.

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4 1. Extract published by Papus, Martines de Pasqually, p. 124

5 Moreover, one should not believe that, when Martines speaks of China, this should always be taken literally, because, as Mr. Le Forestier pointed out, he uses the word *Chinois*, as a kind of anagram of "Noachites".

6 One hundred, of course, with the reservation that the journeys in question, if not to be attributed entirely to this single person, should perhaps be partly attributed to his initiator.

7 The journeys of which Falcke speaks would coincide approximately with the period when the Jews were expelled from Spain; however, we do not wish to say that there is any reason to attach great importance to this connection.

This last point raises further questions to which we will have to return; but, before that, we must point out that the very fact that Martines never mentions the exact origin of his knowledge, or that he vaguely relates it to the "Orient", is perfectly understandable: since he could not transmit as such the initiation that he himself had received, he did not have to indicate its origin, which would have been at least useless; it seems that, in his letters, he never expressly alluded to his "predecessors" except once, and that without adding the slightest detail, therefore without affirming in short anything more than the existence of some kind of initiatory transmission[8]. 11. It is quite certain, in any case, that the form of this initiation was not that of the Order of the Elected Coens, since the latter did not exist before Martines himself, and we see him developing it little by little, from 1754 to 1774, without ever having been able to fully organize it[9].

Here naturally lies the answer to an objection that may occur to some: if Martines was "commissioned" by some initiatory organization, how is it that his Order was not, in a way, entirely "preformed" from the outset, with its rituals and degrees, and that, in fact, it always remained in a state of imperfect draft, without anything being definitively established? Undoubtedly, many of the higher-degree Masonic systems that emerged around the same time were in the same situation, and some existed little more than "on paper"; But if they simply represented the particular conceptions of an individual or a group, there is nothing surprising about that, whereas for the work of the authorized representative of a real initiatic organization, things, it seems, should have turned out quite differently. This is to consider the matter only superficially; in reality, on the contrary, one must consider that Martines' "mission" precisely involved the work of "adaptation" that was to lead to the formation of the Order of the Elected Coens, work that his "predecessors" had not had to do because, for one reason or another, the time had not yet come, and perhaps they would not even have been able to do it—we will

8 " I have never sought to mislead anyone, nor to deceive those who came to me in good faith to acquire some knowledge that my predecessors transmitted to me" (quoted by Papus, Martines de Pasqually, p. 123).

9 When Willermos says that he succeeded his father in his ministry, it should not be translated, as Mr. Van Rijnberk too hastily does, as Sovereign Master of the Order, which, at that time, could not yet be in any way a question.

explain why later. Martines was unable to bring this work to a complete conclusion, but this proves nothing against what lay at the outset; in truth, two causes appear to have contributed to this partial failure: it is possible, on the one hand, that a series of unfavorable circumstances continually obstructed what Martines intended; And it is also possible, on the other hand, that he himself was inferior to his task, despite the "psychic powers" he manifestly possessed, which should have facilitated it for him, whether he had them in a completely natural and spontaneous way, as sometimes happens, or, more probably, he had been specially "prepared" for this purpose. Willermoz himself acknowledges that "his verbal inconsistencies and his imprudence have provoked reproaches and much unpleasantness"[10]; it seems that these imprudences consisted above all in making promises he could not keep, or at least not immediately, and also in sometimes admitting too readily individuals who were not sufficiently "qualified." No doubt, like many others, after receiving the necessary "preparation," he had to work on his own at his own risk and peril; at least, he does not appear to have ever committed any errors that would have caused him to withdraw his initiation, since he actively pursued his work until the very last moment and ensured its transmission before dying. Moreover, we are far from thinking that the initiation Martines received was beyond a certain, still quite limited, degree, and in any case did not exceed the realm of "minor mysteries," nor did his knowledge, although very real, truly possess the "transcendent" character that he himself seems to have attributed to it. We have already explained this on another occasion[11], and we pointed out, as characteristic features in this regard, the "ceremonial magic" aspect of the ritual "operations," and the importance attached to results of a purely "phenomenal" order. This is not a reason, however, to reduce these results, and even less so Martines' "powers," to the level of mere "metapsychic phenomena," as they are understood today. Mr. van Rijnberk, who seems to hold this view, is clearly harboring very great illusions about the scope of the latter, as well as about that of modern psychological theories, illusions that, for our part, we find it quite impossible to share.

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10 Letter already cited to Baron von Türkheim (July 1821).

11 *A new book on the Order of the Elect Coens,* published in December 1929.

On the other hand, we must add a remark of particular importance: the very fact that the Order of the Elected Coens was a new form did not allow it to constitute, on its own and independently, a valid and regular initiation; for this reason, it could only recruit its members from among those who already belonged to an initiatory organization, to which it thus came to be superimposed as a set of higher degrees; and, as we said above, this organization, providing it with the indispensable basis which it would otherwise have lacked, had to be inevitably Freemasonry! Consequently, one of the conditions required by Martines' "preparation", in addition to the teaching received elsewhere, had to be the acquisition of Masonic degrees; this condition was probably lacking in his "predecessors", and that is why they could not have done what he did. It was indeed as a Freemason, and not otherwise, that Martines presented himself from the beginning, and it was "within pre-existing Lodges that, like any founder of a system of high degrees, he undertook, with more or less success depending on the case, to build the "Temples" where some members of these same Lodges, chosen as the most suitable, would work according to the rite of the Elected Coens. On this point at least, there can be no ambiguity: if Martines received a mission," it was that of founding a Masonic rite or "regime" of high degrees, into which he would introduce, by clothing them in an appropriate form, the teachings that he had drawn from another initiatory source.

(*To be continued*)